

THE GREAT CONTEST.

GRANT'S RAPID PROGRESS.

Capture of Petersburg

Richmond Cut off from South Carolina

Retreat of the Rebels Across the Appomattox.

Thirteen Cannon, Several Stands of Colors, and Between 300 and 400 Prisoners Taken.

BRAVERY OF THE NEGRO TROOPS.

GEN. SMITH PERSONALLY THANKS THEM.

The Rebels Abandon their Fortifications in Front of Bermuda Hundred.

PRECARIOUS POSITION OF RICHMOND.

Details of Grant's Great March and Crossing the James.

WAR DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL DISPATCHES.

Secretary Stanton to Gen. Dix—The Capture of Petersburg—Highly Important Details.

WASHINGTON, Friday, June 17, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. DIX: The following dispatches have been received by this Department:

CITY POINT, Wednesday, June 15, 1864.

via Jamestown Island, 5:30 a. m., Thursday, June 16, 1864.

Smith, with 15,000 men, attacked Petersburg this morning.

Gen. Butler reports from his Observatory, near Bermuda Hundred, that there has been sharp fighting, and that the troops and trains of the enemy were, as he writes, moving from the city across the Appomattox, as if retreating.

Hancock is not near enough to render Gen. Smith any aid.

The Richmond papers have nothing to indicate a suspicion of our crossing the James River. They expect to be attacked from the direction of Malvern Hill.

CITY POINT, Va., Wednesday, June 15—5:30 p. m.

Our latest report from Smith was at 4 p. m. He had carried a line of intrenchments at Beatty's House, the colored troops assaulting and carrying the rifle pits with great gallantry, but he had not yet carried the main line. He describes the Rebel artillery fire as very heavy.

He expected to assault this line just before dark. Hancock is within three miles of Smith.

CITY POINT, Va., Thursday, June 16, 1864.

via Jamestown Island—11:45 a. m.

At 7:20 p. m. yesterday, Smith assaulted and carried the principal line of the enemy before Petersburg, taking 13 cannon, several stands of colors, and between 300 and 400 prisoners. This line is two miles from Petersburg. Hancock got up and took position on Smith's left at 3 a. m. to-day. There was heavy firing in that direction from 5 to 6 o'clock. No report has been received yet.

DOUTHAIRD'S LANDING, Va., 1 p. m., June 16.

After sending my dispatch of this morning from the heights south-east of Petersburg, I went over the conquered lines with Gen. Grant and the engineer officers. The works are of the very strongest kind, more difficult to take than was Missionary Ridge at Chattanooga. The hardest fighting was done by the black troops. The forts they stormed were the worst of all. After the affair was over, Gen. Smith went to thank them, and tell them he was proud of their courage and dash. He says they cannot be exceeded as soldiers, and that hereafter he will send them into a difficult place as readily as the best white troops.

They captured six out of the sixteen cannon which he took.

The prisoners he took were from Beauregard's command. Some of them said they had just crossed the James above Drury's Bluff.

I do not think any of Lee's army had reached Petersburg when Smith stormed it. They seem to be there this morning, however, and to be making arrangements to hold the west side of the Appomattox.

The town they cannot think of holding, for it lies directly under our guns.

The weather continues splendid.

CITY POINT, Va., 4:15 p. m., June 16, 1864.

General Butler reports from Bermuda Hundred, that the enemy have abandoned the works in front of that place. His troops are now engaged in tearing up the railroad between Petersburg and Richmond.

The following dispatch does not designate the hour, but it is supposed to be later than the preceding ones:

JAMESTOWN, Va., June 16, 1864.

"I came down from the pontoon above Fort Powhatan, with dispatches for Secretary Stanton. Just as I left, Capt. Pitkin reported to me that Petersburg was in our possession."

Nothing of recent date has been heard from General Sheridan, but the Richmond flag of the 15th contains a dispatch from General Lee, stating that Sheridan had been routed in an engagement with Fitz Lee and Hampton, losing 500 prisoners and leaving his dead and wounded on the field.

From General Sherman, a dispatch dated last night at 9 o'clock, has been received. It only states the relative positions of the forces. No serious engagement had yet occurred.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

SPECIAL DISPATCHES OF THE NEW-YORK TRIBUNE.

The Last Grand Movement—How the Army Marched—The Enemy Entirely in the Dark—Crossing Long Bridge—Passing the Swamps—Crossing the James River.

Special Dispatch to the N. Y. Tribune.

CHARLES CITY COURT-HOUSE, Va., HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, Wednesday, June 15—6 a. m.

via WASHINGTON, June 17, 1864.

The works on the Cold Harbor line were not relinquished fully until two o'clock yesterday morning, yet the entire army had reached the James by sunset last night, the average distance marched being twenty-five miles.

New-York Tribune

VOL. XXIV.....No. 7,240. NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1864. PRICE THREE CENTS.

When a great army moves, it fills all the roads, it seeks every country cross-road, every farm by-road, and uses it, no matter how circuitous the road, no matter what direction it pursues, so that it intersects some road that does make toward the right point, it must be used. Troops often march ten or fifteen miles, and the point reached shall not be five from that of starting.

The army, moving down the Chickahominy in this order, Wilson's cavalry in the advance, followed by the 5th Army Corps, then the 2d Corps, next to the river the 6th Corps, parallel and to the left of the 2d, and the 9th on the extreme left, each of the last three taking care of its own rear. A second line, perhaps a mile in rear of that fought on, had been thrown up at Cold Harbor. The reserve divisions marched out in the afternoon. Those holding the works, as soon as it was fully dark, but not a picket fell back until 2 o'clock in the morning. The new line was held by a strong picket until daylight.

The withdrawal seems to have been undiscovered. Only at one point had the enemy's skirmishers appeared when the last line was relinquished. In the scores of miles we have left the presence of the enemy during the war, I do not recall another instance where this device of a second line far in the rear was used. In this case it proved to be unnecessary, but it was a wise precaution that would have been of vast service had our purpose been divine and the enemy followed too eagerly.

Ten miles down the stream from Cold Harbor is the remains of the Long Bridge, that figures in the narrative of the Peninsula campaign. The causeways leading to it on either side are there still, and in good condition. The bridge proper had disappeared. A few pontoons now fill the breach. The cavalry crossed unmolested, save by the videttes of a North Carolina regiment, on the evening of the 12th. The 5th Corps followed early the succeeding morning, and marched two or three miles directly toward Richmond, and formed line of battle nearly up to White Oak Swamp.

If it were the purpose of the enemy to attack, he must come from that quarter. The 2d Corps marched to the bridge in the hours between midnight and daylight, and there halted four hours for coffee and a snatch of sleep. Then marching at 9 o'clock, it halted only on arriving here; faced up the roads leading toward Richmond, and finally lay down to rest in admirable works of its own construction. At dark, the 5th Corps left its position, looking toward White Oak Swamp, and falling in after the 2d, reached here during the night and early yesterday morning.

Meanwhile the 6th and 9th Army Corps, moving further down the Chickahominy, crossed on pontoons at Jones Bridge. The former struck the James three miles below here at noon yesterday, the rear coming up by night. This march carried thirty miles in as many consecutive hours. The 9th came in at the heels of the 6th, getting comfortably into camp last evening.

The weather yesterday and the day before was peculiarly favorable for rapid marching, being exceptionally cool and cloudy, and on this side of the Chickahominy the trains moved on different roads from the troops, so that the dust did not trouble us.

The march to the James River, then, has been successfully, rapidly, and smoothly accomplished. I cannot help contrasting it with that other time when the Army of the Potomac marched from the Chickahominy to the James. I need not elaborate the contrast; the bare suggestion is enough to point all the difference between an advance and a retreat, an undisturbed march and a badgered but stubborn flight—stubborn because Summer and Sedgwick were of the rear-guard. But that was 1862, and this is 1864; and the two years have not been without their lessons, one of which has been discovered for us a man.

The 18th Corps, Baldy Smith, as I have stated before, marched to White House to take transports for Bermuda Hundred. Last night it passed up the river, and by this time has disembarked at its destination. It had been away from there but a fortnight, had been to the other side of Richmond by a journey of 250 miles via James River, Fort Monroe, York River, White House, and a march of 20 miles, and now back again over the same route; had been in two battles at Cold Harbor, and severe skirmishing during a full week; had lost 3,000 men killed and wounded. A good fortnight's work, and an instance of consummate generalship.

Speaking of Generalship, it is worth noting that the Richmond papers denounce that which called Breckinridge from the valley and enabled Hunter to rout their remaining forces in that quarter.

On the principle which led the Roman Armies to intrench every night in the regulation manner of the time, even when marching through their own provinces, the army on reaching here faced about toward Richmond, the presumed direction of the enemy, the right became the left, and all could have gone into battle with 10 minutes notice.

Three weeks ago the Engineer Brigade at Washington, under Gen. Benham was ordered to be ready to take up, prepared with its pontoon train to lay a bridge across the James. In the exact fullness of time it reached here yesterday noon, and had completed a bridge at dark.

The bridge consists of over one hundred pontoons, about the same number as that across the mouth of the Chickahominy on McClellan's retreat down the Peninsula two years ago, said to have been the longest floating bridge ever laid. That was placed by the 50th New York Engineers; this by the 15th New York Engineers. The locality is White Oak Point, half a mile below Windmill Point, and some six miles below Harrison's Landing.

Meanwhile, Gibbon's division of the 9d Corps had crossed by steambot ferry. The remainder of the corps crossed during the night, partly by ferry and partly by bridge. The order was that the 6th Corps should follow, that to be succeeded by the 9th, while the 5th should remain in position, and finally cross last. To-morrow morning, will see everything on the other side. And once on the other side, your imagination is as good as mine.

Grant's Last Grand Movement—Crossing the River James—Interesting Details of our Movements and those of the Enemy.

Special Dispatch to the N. Y. Tribune.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, Wednesday, June 15, 1864.

via WASHINGTON, Friday, June 17, 1864.

The fourth scene in Grant's Virginia campaign is now approaching a successful termination. A pontoon bridge laid under the supervision of Brig. Gen. Benham of the United States Engineers, now spans the James at the Neck, below Douthard's plantation, while three miles above at Wilcox's wharf, and opposite Wind Mill Point, transports are busily engaged in passing troops to the other side. Hancock is already over, having crossed his corps in transits yesterday afternoon and last night, and this morning the 5th Corps will follow. A portion of the 5th and of the 6th Corps crossed on the pontoon below during the night. Burnside with the trains brings up the rear of the left column and will cross during the day.

Our troops on the western bank have been so disposed as to ward off any attempt of the enemy to dislodge them. An attack, however, is impossible.

Owing to the width and depth of the river, it was feared that it would be impossible to pontoon it, but the skill of engineering overcame the natural difficulties of the operation.

Gen. Grant and staff joined Butler at Bermuda Hundred yesterday. The transports conveying the 18th Corps passed Wilcox's Wharf on their way.

The crossing in transports to Windmill Point is necessarily a slow process, and it is improbable that everything will be over before night.

The advance from Cold Harbor was made in two columns—the 6th and 9th forming the left, and crossing the Chickahominy at Jones Bridge, and the 5th and the 2d the right, crossing the river at Long Bridge, three miles above. The march of the left column was unmarked by any important events. The river was crossed by the 6th Corps in the afternoon and evening of Monday. The 9th followed during the night. Yesterday morning Gen. Wright, whose headquarters had been established on Monday night on the west bank of the river, advanced on the road leading toward Charles City Court-House, on reaching which he moved to the left, reached the James near Douthard's Farm, and bivouacked to await the pontooning of the river at that point.

The column on the right, crossing the Chickahominy at Long Bridge, had some fighting of an unimportant character, participated in by Gen. Crawford's division of the 5th Corps, and a portion of Wilson's cavalry. On Saturday the 11th inst., the 5th Corps left its position on the left of the 9d Corps then lying in the trenches, and moving across the railroad bivouacked in line of battle at Providence Meeting-House. At 6 o'clock on Sunday night, Warren again advanced toward the river, reaching Long Bridge at 11 o'clock. Chapman's brigade of cavalry was found skirmishing with the enemy, and covering the laying of the pontoons, which was accomplished at about midnight, when the cavalry crossed, followed by Warren in the following order: Crawford, Ayers, Cutler and Griffin. Crawford was immediately thrown into a position to cover the crossing of the remaining divisions of the 5th and the whole of the 2d Corps.

movement commenced. Besides the portion of the Confederate army upon our front this side the Chickahominy, their lines extended across the river at New Bridge, and down upon the other side to Bottom's Bridge. We had an opportunity of examining the enemy's lines a few days since, through the glasses which were kept at the signal station on the left of our lines down the Chickahominy. These stations are in the tops of the highest trees, and the ascent to the small platform in the top is by ladders tied along the trunk of the tree. For an hour, we interested ourselves in examining the wonderful developments which these powerful glasses, in the hands of one practiced in observations, discovers. What a wonderful enlargement of the scene before us.

Instead of a wide stretch of country of a dozen miles, with hills receding behind hills and fading into indistinctness, a skirt of woods discloses a General's headquarters, neatly arranged, miles away, under the overhanging hills. There you discover a bit of road, and watching it you observe regiments of soldiers passing for an hour where the naked eye discovers nothing at all. Here a redoubt is discovered, mounting several guns, opposite a ford of the river, and then a line of rifle pits. There again, just as the sun goes down behind the spires of Richmond, you see a long line of nearly two thousand men marching from the woods with axes, shovels and picks, and of course you know at once where the enemy's works are strongest. It is such information as this, invaluable to the Commanding-General, which the signals are constantly sending to headquarters, and which has, in very many instances, furnished the material for action in the most critical moments. One of the most curious of the recent discoveries of the Signal Corps demands a description.

When first seen upon the railroad near Bottom's Bridge, it looked like a car in front of a locomotive, roofed with a singular covering.

But soon the roof was turned vertically, disclosing itself as a mail-proof shield, perforated with a port-hole, behind which a large pivot-gun was mounted. The locomotive keeps up steam constantly, and stands upon the road near a curve, overhanging the railroad bridge of the Chickahominy, and retreats again to its cover, in which it is entirely beyond the reach of our guns. An account of this same machine had been given by a contraband from Richmond but it had never been seen until now.

A member of the Christian Commission on board the steamer Highland Light, who went on shore after the boat had hauled out into the stream and came on board just before the steamer left, reports that Gen. Sheridan's cavalry had returned with Gen. Hunter's command, and both were now united with the Army of the Potomac. We give the report for what it is worth.

REBEL NEWS.

Extracts from Rebel Papers.

From THE PETERSBURG EXPRESS, Monday, June 13, 1864.

THE REPULSE OF THE ENEMY AT PETERSBURG—CONGRATULATORY ORDERS.

HEADQUARTERS FIRST MILITARY DISTRICT, 1st Div., 3d Corps, Va., June 13, 1864.

SPECIAL ORDERS No. 11.—VII. To the troops of my command for the defense of Petersburg, on the south side of the Appomattox, on the 9th inst., I have, with the approval and under the instructions of the Commanding-General, to offer my grateful acknowledgments for the gallant and successful repulse of the enemy upon their successful repulse of the enemy. Approaching with nine regiments of infantry and cavalry, and at least four pieces of artillery, they searched our lines from Battery No. 1 to Battery No. 32, a distance of nearly three miles, and after a long and desperate struggle, they were repulsed and their retreat was covered by the 4th Regt. Va. Vols. and one company (Capt. Wood's Co. F.) of the 23d S. C., with Sturdivant's battery and a few guns in position, and Talliaferro's cavalry, kept them at bay, and punished them severely until they reached the Jerusalem Plankroad in front of Battery 22, defended by Maj. Archer's corps of reserves, and second-class Militia, and by one piece of Sturdivant's Battery, a howitzer, under the temporary command of Brig. Gen. Gordon. Then, with overwhelming odds, they were repulsed, and succeeded only at last in penetrating a gap in the line, and in flanking and gaining the rear of a mere handful of citizen soldiers, who stood firm and fought bravely as veterans until ordered to fall back. Alas! some of them were captured, and their bodies were found lying on the ground, their front to the foe, consoling with their blood the soil of the homes they defended. Their immediate commanders have reported the heroism of them all, the living and the dead, and now with pride and gratitude, I announce that Beauregard has thanked Archer and his comrades on the very spot of their devotion. If they lost killed, wounded and missing, 65 out of less than 150 men, they spent their blood bravely to the enemy. If Sturdivant's battery lost one gun, and Archer's his regimental colors, and if they lost half a mile of ground, they gained about a half hour of time and saved their beloved city by holding on long enough for Sturdivant's and Archer's Virginia Infantry, with Wood's S. C. Company, a company of convalescents, and a company of penitents, to drive back the insolent foe from approaches which their footstep for the first time had reached. With their help at Newbury at the last time. With such troops as all have proved themselves, commanders may well give assurance with confidence to the people of Petersburg. A people who can thus fight for their altars must be aided, supported, guarded by every arm of the Government. Their wives and daughters are daily and hourly nursing our sick and wounded, they wipe the hot brow, cool the fevered lips, and tenderly nourish and comfort the suffering soldiers in their hospitals. The angel nurses and the patriotic mothers who do not fall into the hands of ruffian invaders. His very militia has set an example which inspires the confidence that Petersburg is indomitable, and which consoles and compensates for every drop of blood which has been spilled at Newbury at the last time. With such troops as all have proved themselves, commanders may well give assurance with confidence to the people of Petersburg. A people who can thus fight for their altars must be aided, supported, guarded by every arm of the Government. Their wives and daughters are daily and hourly nursing our sick and wounded, they wipe the hot brow, cool the fevered lips, and tenderly nourish and comfort the suffering soldiers in their hospitals. The angel nurses and the patriotic mothers who do not fall into the hands of ruffian invaders. 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